



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

JUNE 10, 2010



NEWSLETTER

what is the study focus?

The focus of the study is to develop a comprehensive plan for managing the corridor and determine what, if anything, can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility. The study is a collaborative process with Flathead County, the MDT Missoula District, other agencies, and the public, identifying transportation needs for the roadway section from the intersection of Secondary 486 (S-486) and Blankenship Road north of Columbia Falls (approximate reference post 9.5) to the junction with Camas Creek Road (approximate reference post 22.7). The entire corridor study area is within the Flathead National Forest and adjacent to Glacier National Park. S-486 is also referred to as the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) and Forest Highway 61. The study is expected to be completed in August 2010. Please refer to the study map on the following page for more detail.

The study will provide a basic description of the environmental setting. This consists of preliminary identification of potential improvements (including funding options and phasing), management strategies, and environmental impacts and potential mitigation. The consultant, PB Americas, will follow the process as defined in the Montana Business Process to Link Planning Studies and NEPA/MEPA Reviews, which require public outreach and coordination with other agencies. Issues that have been identified and will be reviewed within the corridor include but are not limited to:

- threatened or endangered species
- air quality (roadway dust)
- wild and scenic rivers
- water quality
- serving as access to Glacier National Park
- public sentiment
- safety
- wildlife
- fisheries

contact us

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schedule

The study began on March 1, 2010 and is expected to be completed in August 2010. The consultant began the process of collecting information for existing corridor conditions for the study area in March 2010.

next step?

A public meeting will be held **July 27 at 6:30 p.m.** at the Discovery Center to review the results of the draft study document. Please check the website for more details and information.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/



what we've heard so far...

On April 20, 2010 a public meeting was held to introduce the study. 73 attendees came to the meeting with approximately 50 people providing comments in writing or by speaking at the meeting. A summary of the public meeting is located on the study website.

Since the beginning of the study, March 1, 2010, 134 comments have been emailed, mailed or provided via the MDT website.

Summary of comments and concerns:

- Dust
- Access to Glacier NP
- Water Quality
- Health Issues
- Emergency Response
- Pollution
- Road Surface Issues
- Zoning
- Overpopulation
- Character Preservation
- USFWS Jeopardy Decision
- Development
- Safety
- Road Maintenance
- Air Quality
- Visibility Issues
- Cultural Changes
- Drainage Issues
- Traffic, Speeding
- Tourism
- Wildlife / Habitat



Taken at April 20, 2010 public meeting. Image courtesy of the Hungry Horse News.

On April 21, 2010 a resource agency meeting was held. The participants discussed the regulatory requirements and issues and concerns from the agency's perspective. PB also provided a summary of the public meeting held the evening before. *Continued on page 4.*

comment

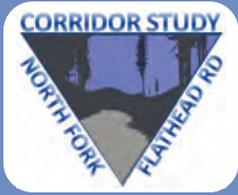
We want to hear from you at this point in the study if we did not accurately capture your issue or concern.

In July, there will be a draft study document available that will present another important opportunity to provide us with your feedback.

The corridor study document does not determine which improvement options will be forwarded or guarantee final decisions will have consensus. It does not prohibit any improvement option, including taking no action.

Simply stated, your comments help the corridor study process sift through all issues and concerns to streamline the process. The intent of public involvement is to increase the quantity and quality of information available to the public.

Commenting on a document or study process is not a "vote" for or against any course of action, or any possible maintenance option. The information provided throughout the process benefits the decision makers, supplying relevant information about issues and concerns. Comments are encouraged.

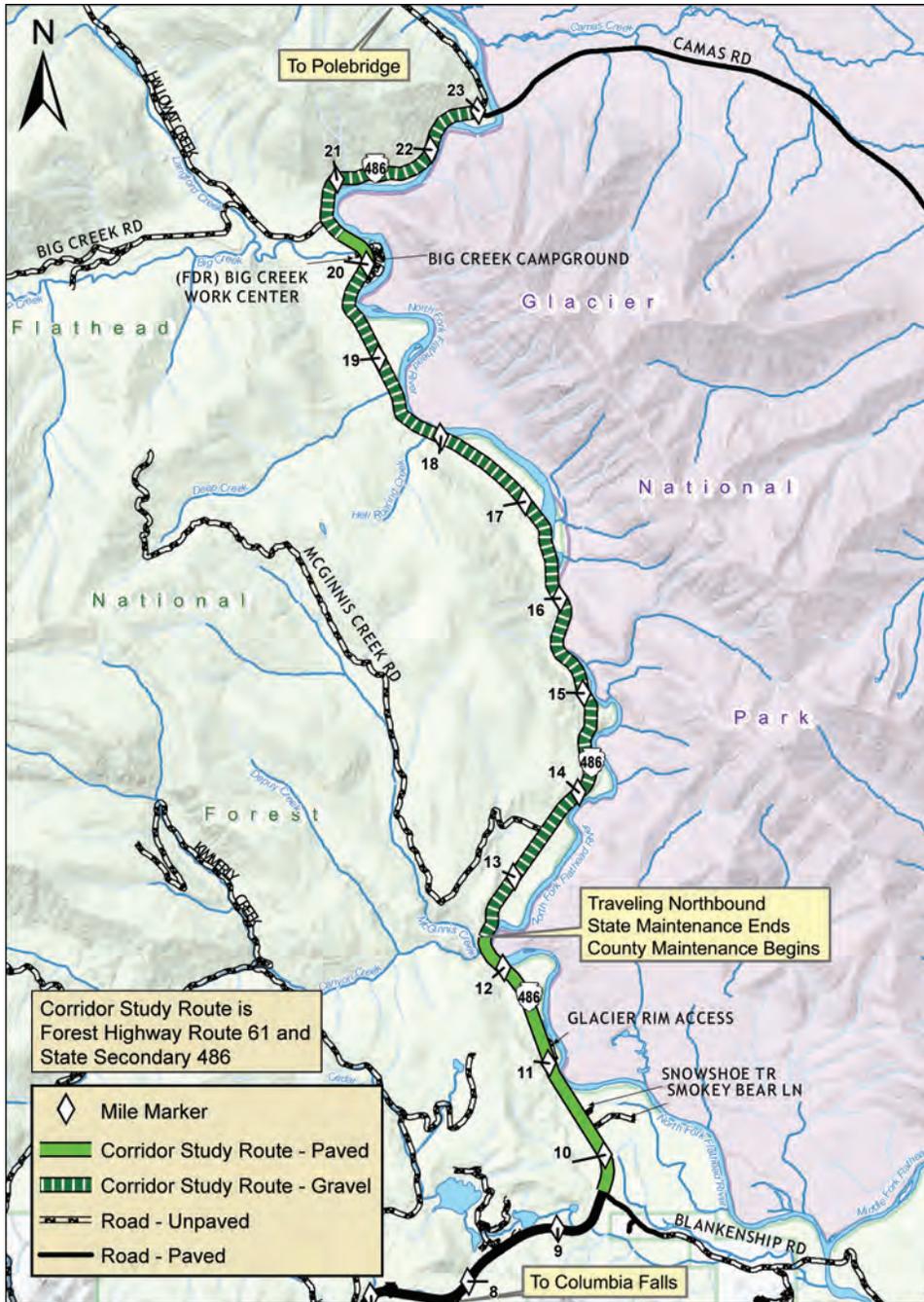


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study map



montana secondary highway fast facts...

4,674 miles The number of Secondary miles statewide.

95 miles The number of miles in Flathead County on the Secondary system.

67% vs. 33%
The percentage of paved vs. the percentage of gravel surface on the Secondary system statewide.

82% vs. 18%
The percentage of paved vs. the percentage of gravel surface on the Secondary system within Flathead County.

25.6 feet Average statewide secondary roadway width.

32.6 feet Average S-486 secondary roadway width.

2009 weighted annual average daily traffic:

- Statewide secondary highways **450 vehicles**
- S-486 (reference post 0 - 22.7) **755 vehicles**
- Study section of S-486 (reference post 9.5 - 22.7) **280 vehicles**

what we've heard so far... *(continued)*

Multiple stakeholder interviews have also been conducted – to help the study team further understand issues and concerns within the study area of the North Fork Road. During the interviews the study team heard:

- wildlife is plentiful and often seen along or adjacent to the roadway
- road condition is a deterrent to traveling the road
- road drainage is a problem and contributes to the potholes
- current summer maintenance schedule is inadequate
- speed is a problem that exacerbates the dust problem in the dry summer months
- the number of motorists that are using the road is increasing year to year

The needs identified on this roadway that have been expressed by members of the general public, stakeholder groups and staff from resource agencies include:

- A large amount of dust is present at speeds approximately 20 mph and greater. The dust causes visibility issues which can lead to safety concern for any vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists on the side of the roadway.
- The maintenance of the roadway by Flathead County is challenging due to up to 44 foot widths along this roadway. This width can require up to eight passes with the grater and equates to funding issues for this maintenance.
- The washboard conditions are of concern to regular travelers of the roadway, the tendency described is that vehicles slide off the road in the washboard condition areas. This washboard condition also has been cited as causing the need for vehicle maintenance.
- Coordination of emergency services to address long travel times from Columbia Falls for ambulances and fire fighting equipment vehicles.

did we get it right?

We want to hear from you if we have not accurately captured an issue or concerns you have about the study area. You can send us an email to mdtnffrteam@mt.gov with your additional information or fill out the comment form on the website at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/comment_form.shtml.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/



tell us what you think...

The information provided throughout the process benefits the decision makers, supplying relevant information about issues and concerns. Comments are encouraged.

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